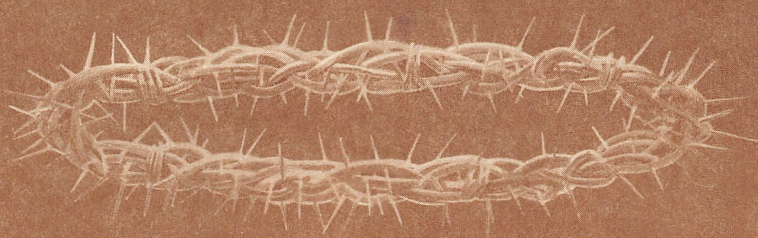


WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?



WHAT MUST WE DO?

by Charles Simpson

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WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

by Charles Simpson



**“The real Gospel will cost us
everything we have!”**

The question, "What is the gospel?" is a most serious one. It fundamentally affects all creation. Virtually all religions have a gospel...all Christians agree that we ought to, in some manner, proclaim the gospel...but the question upon which we have not yet agreed is, What is the gospel?

The seriousness of understanding just what the gospel is, is reflected in the Scriptures. Statements like, "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it"(Mark 8:35 NAS), clearly portray the picture that the gospel is that for which we are to lay down our very lives. The New Testament gospel is not cheap.

THE GOSPEL - A DEFINITION

The word gospel means to announce good news. So, the gospel is the good news! So far, we would all agree. Now the question comes: What good news? Again we look to the Scriptures for a definition. The Apostle Paul furnished this definition when he said:

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved if you hold fast the Word which I preached to you unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised again on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1-4 NAS).

Paul adds in Romans 14:9:

For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

The gospel, then, is that Jesus died for our sins...rose again...and became Lord. In verses 22-28 of that same chapter, Paul discusses the fact that

Jesus Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (vs. 25). When all has been subjected to Him, He, in turn, will be subjected to God the Father and deliver the Kingdom up to Him.

The early church summed up the gospel in this phrase, "Jesus is Lord...He is King!" The heathen said, "Caesar is Lord," to which the Christian disciples countered, "Jesus is Lord!" For this, many of them laid down their lives unto death. All that Caesar professed to be, Jesus was - the rightful governor of the kingdoms of this world! This is the "full gospel." The full gospel will not have had its intended effect and fulfillment until Jesus reigns in all creation. The aim of the gospel is to declare and enthrone Jesus as King, which is His rightful place. Every spiritual experience and doctrine - the new birth...baptism...healing...baptism in the Spirit...or deliverance, is a means to the establishment of God's government in our lives and in the earth.

FULL GOSPEL OR HALF GOSPEL?

In Luke 2:10-11, the angel of the Lord announces the birth of Jesus this way: "Do not be afraid; for behold I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the City of David there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

This announcement made by the heavenly messenger is termed Good News Gospel. We join our voices triumphantly as we declare, "Jesus is our Saviour," - but they trail away when it comes to saying, "Jesus is Lord." We need to remember that Jesus was first Saviour; then Lord. But He was Saviour, so He could become Lord. The purpose of the cross was that He might become Lord of the redeemed. Without Lordship, that purpose is frustrated. If we preach "salvation" without presenting His Lordship, we preach only half the gospel.

Likewise there is a tendency (among evangelicals particularly) to quote the following two verses from Romans, chapter 10, emphasizing "saved" to the neglect of "Lord."

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved (vs. 9 NAS).

For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved (vs. 13 NAS).

We conclude, therefore, that the desired end is to "get people saved," when this is not the case. The desired end is to make Jesus Lord!

It is not calling on the Saviour that saves, it is making Him Lord that saves. The thrust of the gospel is not "get saved"; but rather, "make Jesus your Lord and King" - and that will save you. Salvation is the by-product of God's rule in our lives - not vice-versa. If people are led to believe that they can be saved without letting Jesus be Lord, it is difficult to show them why He should be Lord. It is His Lordship or government that delivers us from Satan now and the power of this world. Salvation is not in eternity, but day by day. To preach salvation apart from Lordship is a "half truth."

The issue at stake in the New Testament is not merely theological assent to the great doctrines...or going to heaven...but practical obedience to His rule. The issue is: does Jesus Christ govern your life?

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?.....But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation.....

Luke 6:46 NIV

THE GOOD NEWS IS ABOUT A KING AND A KINGDOM

The Jews initially rejected Jesus as the Messiah because they were looking for a king, not a suffering servant. Ironically, we Gentiles who know Jesus as the suffering servant can easily miss the truth of His kingship.

The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied of a king and the kingdom He would establish. Hear Isaiah 9:6-7 NAS:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

A child will grow up to be governor - King of Israel! His Kingdom will be established, ordered and peaceful forever. He will be a descendant of David. Many such references are made in the Old Testament. The Jews understood that a king was coming. They erred in that they did not know the principle that humiliation must precede exaltation. Jesus had to serve and suffer before becoming Lord. Nevertheless, the good news was that God's government would be established by His anointed Messiah. Isaiah also prophesied that Messiah's Kingdom would be governed by delegated authority. All kingdoms must operate this way. That is, the central authority is delegated to eschelons of sub-rulerships. No successful governor does all the governing. He appoints others to assist in the administration. It is a better administrator who teaches others to govern, than he who must do it all personally.

Behold a king will reign righteously, and princes will rule justly. And each will be like a refuge from the wind, and a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry country, like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land. Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded, and ears of those who hear will listen. And the mind of the hasty will discern the truth, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly (Isaiah 32:1-4 NAS).

Notice, Isaiah states that the King (Jesus) will rule. Under the King's rule, princes will rule also. The princes derive their authority from the King. So it is in God's Kingdom. All offices within the Kingdom are established under Jesus' Lordship.

The Princes of the Kingdom derive their authority from the King.

Isaiah continues to prophesy that the princes governed by the King will be like a refuge from the winds, storms and blistering heat. Also under God's delegated authority will be streams of water in a land that is parched.

One who relates to the princes, who relate to the King will see, hear and speak plainly.

Isaiah, among other prophets tells of a coming King who will rule on David's throne, delegate His authority, establish His Kingdom with peace and justice in the earth. Every reference to Christ is a reference to these facts. The announcement of the angels was about a Lord, or King. When John the Baptist came preaching, he proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:1-3). He was the official envoy sent before the King to proclaim and prepare (Matthew 3:1-3). When Jesus came,

He, too, came proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15, Matthew 4:17-23).

It seems abundantly clear that Jesus came to govern and establish God's government. We can only come into that government as we are born of the Holy Spirit and lay our lives at His feet. If we allow Him to govern, the result will be righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). These results can only be achieved by His government.

As a part of God's government expressed in the church, we are no longer "of this world." We live in the world...we obey the authorities God places in it...we pray for it - but we are ambassadors here who represent another Kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20 and Colossians 1:13). We are a new race...a new nation... strangers in this present world (I Peter 2:9-25). The church is a colony of heaven on foreign soil. It speaks heaven's language, has heaven's character, is ruled by heaven's authority, and expresses heaven's message in this world. Outside its borders are anarchy, wickedness, uncertainty and death. Inside is righteousness, peace, joy and the love of God. No one can join the Kingdom of God. One must be born into it by the Holy Spirit and placed in the church, under Jesus' Lordship.

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood,
a holy nation, a people belonging to God,
that you may declare the praises of him who
called you out of darkness into his wonderful
light.*

I Peter 2:9 NIV

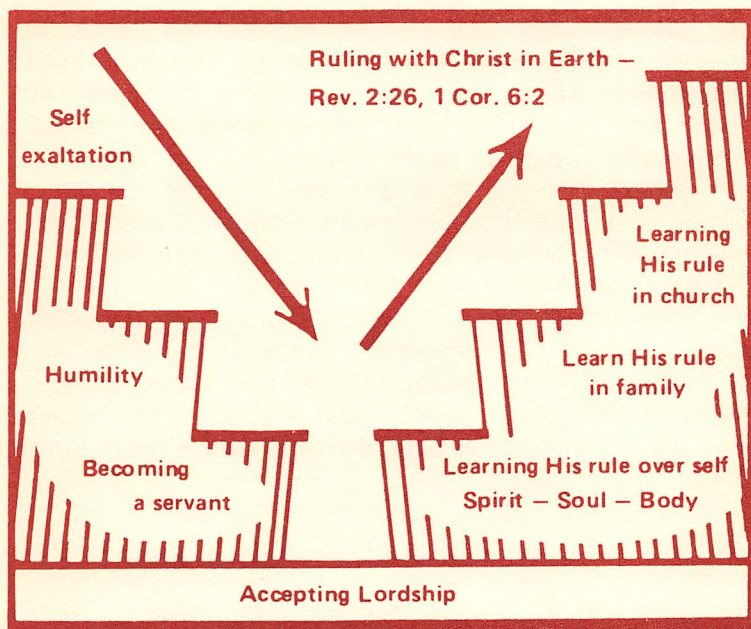
Several years after becoming involved in charismatic ministry, I became over-involved in traveling, teaching and other ministry-related activities. I became tired, physically weak and spiritually vulnerable. I made an appointment with three close friends to meet in a certain city and to seek the Lord for two days. Immediately after gathering, we began to worship and refresh ourselves in His presence. Then we knelt and began to earnestly seek the Lord's leading. Soon I heard myself begin to pray the Lord's prayer: "Our Father,"...I groaned out of deep weariness, ..."Hallowed ...be Thy name"...the words lingered in my heart... "Thy Kingdom come!" I sobbed. From deep within gushed the frustration and hurt of one who had slipped out of the Lord's yoke into the whirling currents of pressures, expediency, good intentions, needs and many other driving forces.

"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," echoed in my mind over and over. Awareness came that I had taken His name, His Word, His ministry and often done my own will. I was broken by my own lawlessness. I began to more deeply than ever desire His government in me and in the earth.

We are warned in God's Word that our ways are not His ways (Isaiah 55:8). When we are born into the Kingdom of God, we have an immediate need to be trained in its language, laws, principles and promises. This process is followed, to some extent, when any alien is naturalized into a new government. It is far more needed when one is born into the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to guide and teach; and Jesus has set certain ministries in the church to conform the new citizens in the ways of God. Discipleship is the process Jesus used and commissioned in order to teach others His ways.

Once Jesus rules in our lives, He immediately begins to teach us how to rule. First, we are taught to rule ourselves - spirit, mind and body. (See Proverbs 14:29, 16:18-19, 32:25; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 9:27). Then, when we have established the Kingdom in our personal lives, we are taught how to rule (administrate) in our family role. Whatever our relationship to the family, we all have areas of responsibility.

We oversee that area under the authority God has set in the home. By right relationship we have righteousness, peace and joy in the family. When one walks into a Christian home, he should sense that he has just walked into the Kingdom of God...there is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).



In order to practically manifest the Kingdom in this way, authority and love are required. Each member must sense both of these qualities of Jesus. I must as father convey a practical sense of the Lord's rule in our home.

Son, Jesus is Lord in our home. He has given me the responsibility to lead our family and govern it for him."

"Yes sir." A godly child will honor his parents, as unto the Lord.

"Now, I delegate you, Son, as ruler over your bedroom. I want you to bring the Kingdom of God into your bedroom. I want it to be a clean, orderly, peaceful and a happy place to be. When you have

governed that, we are going to help Mother bring the Kingdom in the kitchen. Eventually we will govern the whole place - even the yard."

This is practical; perhaps, too practical for some of us. We would rather be "spiritual." Of course, the son must see the Lordship of Jesus in his father's life if he is to receive such instruction.

After one has learned to rule his own life and take his responsibility in the home, then he is ready for responsibility in the church (I Timothy 3:5,12). To promote those who have neither governed themselves nor their families into church leadership, is to encourage anarchy in the church.

When God rules in the church, the church will be able to rule in the world. Many Christians are unaware that we are being trained to rule with Christ (I Corinthians 6:2,3; Revelation 2:26; 3:21). The Kingdom will be established within us, among us (church), and around us (world). This can only be done as we are under His Lordship. When the time comes on His clock, He shall appear and manifest to the world what He has already revealed to His own - He is Lord!

THE KINGDOM REVOLUTIONARY

It would be wonderful if there were no contest - just universal acceptance of Jesus' Lordship. The fact is, however, that authority is the most provocative aspect of the gospel. The good news is bad news to some people. Accepting grace...gifts...prosperity are mild issues. They can be received or ignored. Authority, however, is another matter. Self-will, family disorder, church democracy, world rebellion and satanic opposition will resist Jesus' Lordship every inch of the way.

To merely say that Jesus is Lord scarcely raises an eyebrow; but to make Jesus your Lord and then say it - that is to shake the foundations of every illicit force. For years I preached on the Holy Spirit and my preaching never caused trouble. Then one day I was baptized in the Holy Spirit and the trouble

began! So it is with Lordship. The early church experienced persecution for saying, "Jesus is Lord." The world took them seriously.

At the time of the birth of Jesus, wise men from the East journeyed for weeks and, finally, with much expectation they arrived in Jerusalem. They would soon see the Lord - King of the Jews. Almost out of breath with excitement, they came to Herod's servants. King Herod was a descendant of Esau - an Edomite. He had been maliciously installed as King by Caesar - an insult to the Jews, who were descendants of Jacob. Herod's rule was contrary to the prophecy of Isaac concerning his sons, Esau and Jacob. Israel had sunk to a low level in Jesus' time - cowering before a decadent pagan government.

"Where is the new King...this one just born King of the Jews?" the wise men naively asked. They might have put it this way: "Where is the real King of Israel, Herod?" Do you think their question made Herod nervous? You know it did!

"When you find him, tell me where he is so I can worship him, too," Herod lied. When the wise men did not return with this information, he issued orders that all the males under two years of age in Bethlehem, the city of the prophesied birthplace of the King, be killed. Authority threatens.

The issue that the Sanhedrin used to bring about the crucifixion of Jesus was the Lordship He claimed. The thought of Him being the Christ...King...enraged the existing hierarchy (Matthew 26:63-66). The mockery and torture that followed was the mockery of a king (Matthew 27:11, 27-29, 37, 42). Pilate's question to Jesus at the time of His sentence was, "Are you the King of the Jews?" The scarlet robe, the crown of thorns and the reed all spoke of His Lordship. It was not miracles or bread that they had rejected - it was Lordship.

Later when Peter preached Jesus at Pentecost, he preached that He was Lord and Christ. From that flame spread the gospel of the Kingdom of God and of His Christ. Persecution resulted and their accusers cried, "These men are preaching that there is another King!" And they were. They also said,

"No man can serve two masters." It is this that brings about persecution.

We are told in 2 Timothy 3:12, "All they that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." One day the Lord asked me, "Where is yours?" That question left me wondering as to the extent of Jesus' Lordship in my life.

Matthew 7:21-29 presents the following awesome words spoken by Jesus:

Not every one who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness. Therefore every one who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall; for it had been founded upon the rock. And every one who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall." The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Jesus knew the storms that were in the offing and the human need for an unshakable Kingdom.

THE KINGDOM IS OUR PRIORITY

Jesus, in speaking to His disciples, gave them the requirements for receiving the Kingdom. Many of these are found in Matthew, chapters 5 - 7.

Considering these requirements, one gets the distinct impression that the Kingdom must be our priority, as it was in the lives of Peter, John, Paul and others of the early believers. The words, "Seek ye first the Kingdom..." and "Pray, Thy kingdom come..." impress us that if we give priority to His Kingdom, God will take care of other matters of lesser importance.

Hebrews 12:2 gives us insight into what Jesus saw that made all the suffering and deprivation worthwhile. He was able to communicate this to the disciples - for they willingly left all to receive the Kingdom. Paul, too, saw the goal to be gained and counted everything else loss (Philippians 3:8 and 2 Corinthians 4:7-18). Others, on hearing the gospel, saw only a momentary blessing to be received.

Coming under the Lordship of Jesus requires a violent, radical change of life.

Coming into the Lordship of Jesus, and seeing His Lordship established in our midst, requires a certain violence. This, all these believers saw and embraced. Hear these words of Jesus: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force" (Matthew 11:12 NAS). Paul states this fact, too, in Acts 14:22. "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Do you see that no half-hearted person will fight through the tribulation required to enter the rest of His Lordship?

One day while on a plane returning home from a meeting, I was searching Matthew, chapter 24 and considering it in the light of the days in which we

live, along with the meeting just closed. "Lord," I thought, "if Matthew 24 has something to say about the end of this age...and I am living in the end of this age...then the words contained here ought to give me some direction as to what I should be doing."

Then my eyes fell on verse 14 (NAS): "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."

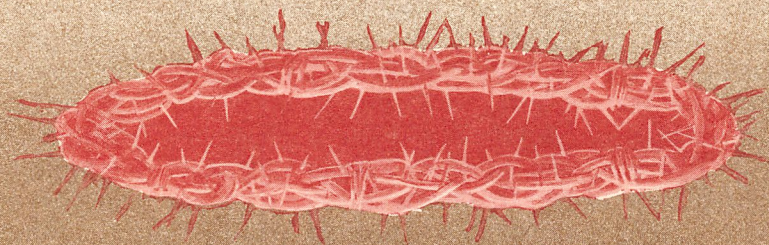
Yes, the good news of the Kingdom will be preached! When kingdoms are falling and uncertainty abounds, we have good news to give to the lost, unstable and confused.

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe...(Hebrews 12:28 NAS).



WHAT MUST WE DO?

by Charles Simpson



**"The heartcry that opens to us the
Kingdom of God."**

"Our citizenship is in heaven"(Philippians 3:20), Paul declares to the Philippian church. Paul held multiple citizenship as a Jew, a Roman and a Christian. As such he was subject to three sets of laws: Roman, Jewish and the law of Christ. Caesar laid claim to Paul's loyalty as a Roman; the Sanhedrin laid claim to his loyalty as a Jew; and Jesus laid claim to Paul's loyalty as a citizen of God's kingdom.

Being a citizen of three kingdoms was not easy. Paul sought to be a better Jew and a better Roman in order to bring glory to the Lord Jesus. He paid his taxes, loved his neighbors and worked with his hands. He sought to be "all things to all men." But from the very outset of his Christian experience, serving the Lord Jesus was his priority. Caesar was lord of Rome, but Jesus was Lord of Paul and the church. Because of Paul's renunciation of earthly ambition and his dedication to enthroning Jesus in every life, he got into trouble. Eventually, Paul lost his Roman and Jewish citizenships through martyrdom. However, he received eternal citizenship in God's kingdom which shall not be taken away. Being a good citizen of heaven will make you an earthly alien.

The kingdom of God consists of those, whether on this side of death or the other, who are registered under God's government through Jesus Christ. This is what the Good News is about! There is another kingdom whose Saviour is the Lord, where abides righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, now and in eternity.

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" Peter declares. Christianity is a nation? I thought it was a denomination. No! Christians are a distinct nation of people among the nations who have a government, laws and a Lord.

Gypsies are known as a nomadic people without a country. Centuries ago, they were driven from their homelands, and have since been wanderers. Nevertheless, they have a king and rulers among them who are recognized.

In a real sense, Christians are pilgrims and sojourners in this world. We are in it, but not of it. We are moving toward the land of God's promise,

which He has prepared for us. Though we are not yet in the land, we are already a people with identity and government. The Lord Jesus is our King. We maintain our identity among the people of the earth by learning and living His ways. One day He shall reign in all the world and we shall reign with Him. In the meantime, He is reigning in our lives and teaching us to reign over ourselves, in our families and in the church, which is His body. As He reigns over us, He is able to reign through us, and one day we shall reign with Him.

Often I have noticed in various large, foreign cities an American community living abroad. Just as in America, where we may have a German community, a French community, a Chinese community and a Latin community, so in foreign cities, there is often an American community. Americans abroad are under the U.S. Government just as we are at home. They speak the same language and have the same customs, but they live away from their homeland, and are subject to a foreign government and its laws. Because they have so much in common with other Americans, they tend to live near one another in some kind of community relationship. So it is in the spiritual realm. Some of us live on this side of the sea of death, some on the other - already in heavenly places. Nevertheless, those who live in Christ share the same government and ways of God. We who yet live in this foreign society, show the righteousness, peace and joy of God's eternal kingdom. While we are yet in this present, secular world we pray for those in authority as ministers of God, that we may have a peaceful atmosphere in which to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus. Though we are involved in this world, our citizenship is in heaven. We are citizens of an eternal kingdom.

Early pietists, reformers and anabaptists strongly reacted to the church-state relationships of the eleventh through the sixteenth centuries. As they separated from the state church, they also separated from the state. They saw themselves as a state within the secular state. So sensitive were they to their separation, that they formed separate communities and

abstained from military service and other secular involvement. Their motivation was not so much pacifistic as it was their awareness that their kingdom was not of this world. Without promoting withdrawal, one could hope for a revival of the same awareness in our generation. We would do well to take seriously Paul's admonition, "Prove yourselves blameless and innovent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15 NAS).

IDENTIFICATION AND ORIENTATION

Jesus spent the last forty days of His time on earth speaking to His disciples about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). I would like to have the transcripts of those sessions! The fact that Jesus spent this most valuable time in that manner indicates the importance of the subject. The disciples were still interested in when the kingdom would come to Israel; Jesus was interested in their receiving the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the King.

His instruction regarding the kingdom never had its full impact until He had sent the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. Then, with divine energy, they began to baptize other disciples and give them the same instruction in God's government that they had received from Jesus.

After Jesus ascended, 120 of His disciples obeyed His command to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit. Finally, on the day of the Jewish feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended in a mighty torrent. Pentecost was fifty days after Passover. At Passover, the Jews celebrated the deliverance from Egypt; at Pentecost, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. Now the Holy Spirit was coming to write a new covenant, not on tables of stone, but in the hearts of committed followers. As Sinai shook with fire and smoke, so did the upper room tremble under the power of God, as God's finger wrote His covenant in their hearts. They were filled not only with the peace

of the Holy Spirit, but with the assurance, "He's there!" The Holy Spirit was saying, "Jesus is there at the Father's right hand! I am come to tell you He is Lord!"

**Jesus Christ is the Lord now,
not in some future age. We do
not wait for another ap-
pearance for His Lordship to
affect life.**

When the power of God came, theology became reality. Suddenly, Jesus' teaching became practical for this life. *He is Lord now, not later!* Looking back on His teaching through Holy Spirit-given spectacles, His rulership was magnified and they were intoxicated with heavenly joy and peace. As the Holy Spirit took over His executive office in the church, God's government was a present and powerful reality expressed in the day-to-day life of the church. They were not of this world and it was all that they could do to stay in it. Soon, existing corrupt leaders would either acknowledge Jesus as Lord or seek to rid themselves of the powerful challenge. The church was regarded by many as subversive, and it was, in the holiest sense. The church was not reacting to Satan's program. It had a job to do and by God's grace they set out to do it: Reclaim the kingdoms of this world for God's glory. Make disciples of all nations, not just in all nations.

Peter's Pentecost message to the thousands of visiting devout Jews was about Jesus' Lordship, His right to rule their affairs. It was no "easy believism" or "greasy grace," that he proclaimed. The challenge was total. He was Lord of all or not at all. The response would have to be total commitment

to His Lordship and His commission to make disciples of all nations.

Standing with the eleven, Peter said:

This Jesus hath God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear...Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified! (Acts 2:32, 33, 36 NAS).

The impact was staggering and clear. They had killed the King. "What must we do?" they cried out by the thousands (almost in unison). This was Peter's moment. He was in charge. He and the others were God's delegated authority...messengers to the multitude. Whatever he said, they would do. They were ready to act.

"Repent!" Peter's voice thundered over the multitude as it had often done over Galilee's waters when he hailed a friend on a passing boat. "...be baptized,...for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And they did, by the thousands. They repented; they were baptized; they received the Holy Spirit in power; they changed history.

Let us examine the question, "What must we do?" Notice that they did not ask, "What must we do to go to heaven when we die?" Prophets had long foretold the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom. Orthodox Jews all looked and longed for His coming. Now they had been told that He not only had come but that they had killed Him. Not only had they missed God's government, but they had murdered the Governor! "What must we do?" they pled.

The apostles suddenly represented the only divine authority present. They were God's delegated representatives, trained for this hour. Hidden to natural vision, the Holy Spirit was dramatically convicting and unveiling truth. Only the apostles could answer their frantic question.

Peter's sermon was not about heaven and hell. True, heaven and hell were at stake, but his message was about the Messiah. Every Jew knew well - all too well - what had happened. "What must we do?" was the earnest plea of men who sorrowed with godly sorrow for their rebellion, and searched with all their hearts for the kingdom of God. Repentance was not simply a matter of dealing with nasty habits. They had rejected the rule of Christ in their lives. As orthodox religionists, their habits were nice, but their heart was nasty. There was murder there...hatred, strife and pride was in them. They were "whitewashed graves!" That is what He had said. He was right.

Repentance is a governmental issue which affects every area of life.

"Repent!" Peter cried. "Turn around. Start with the inside. Make Jesus Lord of your life. Be baptized and identify as His disciple." Proof that one had repented of rejecting Jesus would easily be established by publicly identifying with Jesus in baptism. Physical obedience in baptism would testify to His Lordship. Obedience in baptism would be an act of purification following genuine repentance.

The baptism that Peter preached was no popular cultural exhibition. It was a public identification with one who had recently been slain as a subversive, and His on-going government.

Several years ago I had an experience which helped me to understand what baptism must have meant to those Jews who heard Peter.

It was about 2 A.M. when I arrived in Bombay... travel-weary and dazed from crossing time zones. Nevertheless, I was quickened to the fact that Bombay was a long way from home and that it was a totally

different society. Dress, language, Eastern hospitality and anti-American hostility were constant reminders. By the next day I was south in Cochin and on my way to a small village in the state of Kerala called Mavelihara. The state of Kerala had a Communist government and Hindu religion. Both were strange and foreboding to me.

Police Station Attacked - 2 Killed! - The headlines shouted in Cochin. A band of local Communists had attacked the police station because of its unfriendliness to their objectives. The Prime Minister was to visit that week. The town was in upheaval. Yet the residents were living in the twilight of social apathy drugged by poverty and spiritual darkness.

Red flags lined both sides of the main road going south through small villages. Hindu shrines added to the evidence of an alien atmosphere. "Don't be too obvious with your camera," my Christian friend and host warned. "One of our ministers was badly beaten a few weeks ago. All of his front teeth were knocked out. Real Christians are not popular here with local officials." I did not have to be warned twice.

For several days Ken Sumrall, who had made the trip with me, and I preached to the assembly of Christians who had come from villages throughout Kerala. They sat from early morning until late evening under a brush arbor listening to the Word of God and worshipping. At times, rain filtered through the thatch roof and dropped on them as they sat on the mats which covered the ground. Then Sunday came. Down to the middle of town and down to the river they marched to baptize the new disciples. As they marched they sang to the beat of a large drum. Their songs were of their King whom they served in the midst of a hostile society.

At the river, the Christians lined one bank and looked across to the hostile faces of Hindus and Communists. As they sang to the Lord Jesus, the pastor waded out into the water and briefly proclaimed Jesus as Lord. Against their dark skin their eyes beamed hope and commitment. Their pearl-like teeth shone, and broad smiles of kingdom joy were contrasted

against a background of suffering and persecution.

Soon, one after another, the new converts moved out into the water and stood beside the Lord's appointed shepherd.

"Do you repent of your sin and accept Jesus as Lord?" he would ask in their own language, loudly enough for all to hear.

"Yes!" would come the answer, loud and affirmative. "I turn from my past life. I ask Jesus to forgive me. I will follow Him forever!"

Then placing themselves in the shepherd's hands, they would be lowered in burial..."I baptize you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ..." Amid shouts of hallelujah they were brought forth praising the Lord in a new language. Now there was nothing to which they could return. Baptism meant identity with Jesus. That meant rejection for most of them by society and family. It was not a secret ceremony.

After all of the new disciples were baptized, the line began to form and the procession moved back toward the brush arbor. Again came the beat of the large drum and the chant of Eastern hymns.

"We would be honored if you would march at the head of the group," my host smiled. Under the curious and hostile gazes of onlookers we moved forward. We had just held a registration session for the kingdom of God - publicly.

In Peter's day, registration in the kingdom of God was quickly followed by orientation.

So then these who had received His word were baptized; and there were added that day about 3,000 souls. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:41-42 NAS).

Their decision to come under the government of God as expressed in the church, was a decision to live a new way with new values, attitudes and precepts. To walk this new way they would have to learn it by the apostles' example and instruction. The apostles immediately began to function as Jesus commanded. "Baptize and make disciples. Teach them to observe everything I taught you" (paraphrase).

Satan's Government
of Darkness — Deception
and Dominance



(1) Repentance
Renounce Self Rule &
Rebellion against God
(Satan's Sin)

Area of Rule

(2) Baptism
Burial — Loss of
Citizenship in Satan's
Kingdom by death to it.

Jesus' Government
of Light — Truth
and Fellowship



(3) Receive Holy Spirit
Resurrection of New Creation
and Enthronement of Jesus
as Lord.

Area of Rule

Salvation is not just getting out of something: trouble, guilt or hell. Salvation is also getting into something: the government of God where there is right relationship, peace and joy. Many people want out, but do not know how to come in. The apostles were shepherds to lead the disciples into kingdom life and ways.

As the new babes were born into the kingdom, they came under visible government and into a visible fellowship. Soon they were totally immersed in a new culture. The community accepted full responsibility for the well-being and development of these new disciples who had changed governments.

Paul expresses it this way. "For he delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Colossians 1:13 NAS). We have changed governments! Paul declares.

In order to show more clearly how Christians move from one kingdom to another, Paul reminds us of Israel. In I Corinthians 10:6, 11 Israel is said to be our example.

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (I Corinthians 10:1,2 NAS).

Fifteen-hundred years before Pentecost, Israel had been in Egypt under the whiplash of slavery. They, too, had cried, "What must we do?" Their question was not, "What must we do to get to heaven?" but, "What must we do to change our lives while we live?" Their cry was not to do as little as possible, but as much as possible to separate themselves from the bondage of Egypt.

Israel separated themselves from the government of Pharaoh to the government of Moses through baptism. Moses preached a kingdom gospel. That is, he told them of a place of righteousness, peace and joy where God would rule over them. He told them of Mount Zion and milk and honey. However, he also told them of giants and obstacles. In order to leave Egypt and come into Canaan, they would have to submit to a new governor - Moses. They had to decide if he were really sent from God. Having settled that, they had to decide if the prize was worth the price. Having determined that it was, they started to follow Moses. The first thing he did was to lead

them, by the Lord's direction, to the Red Sea where everyone was baptized...into Moses. They turned their backs on Pharaoh and his pyramids and began the journey. Moses could lead them because He had already lived in the wilderness and had been taught by God the way through it.

There they stood at the water's edge...Pharaoh charging behind them..."Moses! Moses!" they cried. At God's instruction, Moses asserted his God-given authority and the waters parted. The cloud of God's Spirit came upon them. They moved forward putting their lives and confidence in this hope! God did hear our prayer and Moses was sent by Him. As they put themselves, along with all their possessions, family and friends, into Moses' hands, He baptized them into the sea and God baptized them into the cloud, confirming their discipleship. When they came forth, they could never return, though many would often desire to return. It was this constant looking back and denial of God's delegated authority in Moses that prevented the first generation from entering into Canaan. Jesus said it this way, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62 NAS).

When one desires the kingdom of God, or God's government, in his life, he must be ready to repent of his present state. He must acknowledge that going his own way got him into his present state of confusion and lostness. In baptism, he literally lays himself in someone else's hands, believing him to be God's messenger sent to lead him into God's kingdom. Water baptism will put distance between him and the past, as well as identify him as a citizen of the new government. Holy Spirit baptism will confirm to his own heart that Jesus did indeed ordain his pilgrimage and put a wall of fire between him and the past. The Holy Spirit will be a cloud of light to the new disciple, but darkness to those who will not follow the Lord.

Once Israel was baptized under Moses' government, they became Moses' problem - and, oh, what problems! He had the job of turning those millions of slaves into a holy nation, an army that could drive out giants, and occupy a rich land. The journey started

with Israel's cry, "What must we do?" But soon after the exodus began, Moses was crying, "What must I do?"

There is no greater challenge that faces God's people and God's leaders than this! How do we turn an enslaved and divided church into a holy nation, a mighty army? It will begin only as we cry out, "What must we do?" No doubt, we will hear some God-sent man say, "Repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit." As we respond, we will begin to find the government of God.



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